



EDUCATION:

Better Educated Liberians

The Liberian education system is emerging from a prolonged and brutally destructive period of civil unrest. Long standing impacts from the war, compounded by the 2015 school closure due to the Ebola Viral Disease (EVD) outbreak, continue to take a toll on the fragile education system. Liberia is significantly behind most other African countries in nearly all education statistics. For example, the Primary School Net Enrollment Rate, the percentage of primary age students attending primary grades, is only 44 percent. After 14 years of civil war, which resulted in the destruction of much of the country's trained workforce, Liberia is still in the process of rebuilding its educational system. USAID, in concert with other donors, works with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to address education challenges related to access, quality of instruction, and improved governance of the education system.

USAID's education programs focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning (especially in early grade reading), and increasing equitable access to safe learning opportunities for girls and for youth who missed out on education due to postwar reconstruction and a weak education system. USAID is helping to improve the quality of curricula, teaching and management staff, instructional and learning resources, data systems and policy environment essential to providing basic education services to all Liberians.

YOUTH SUPPORT

The USAID Advancing Youth Project has enhanced the capacity of the MOE and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide increased access to alternative basic education, social opportunities, leadership development, and sustainable livelihood pathways for out-of-school Liberian youth. The support ensures the MOE and NGOs are able to provide youth, who have had little or no previous schooling, with the educational and work-readiness skills and training necessary to succeed.

HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT

Through the Excellence in Higher Education for Liberian Development project, USAID partners with the University of Liberia and Cuttington University to build Centers of Excellence to expand access, improve quality, and enhance the relevance of higher education programs in engineering and agriculture, fields that are critical to addressing Liberia's development challenges.

EBOLA RESPONSE

USAID/Liberia is also providing logistical support for the MOE's national campaign to train school personnel in Ebola prevention and awareness, as well as provide technical assistance to the MOE to further develop, monitor and implement its Ebola prevention and response plan.

With the re-opening of schools in February 2015, USAID is supporting the MOE in restoring basic education in the country and returning children to safe learning environments through the Education Crisis Response program. Through USAID's Education Crisis Response for Liberia program, implemented by UNICEF, toilet facilities, hand washing stations, and clean water pumps are being installed in 120 schools.

EARLY GRADE READING SUPPORT

USAID plans to fund the implementation of an early grade reading activity for grades one and two students, and pilot test emergent literacy skills for students in public kindergarten schools in six targeted counties in Liberia. The goal of this activity is that after two years of schooling, grade one and two public primary school students will read and understand grade level text in English and pre-primary students will develop the oral vocabulary lexicon required for emergent literacy skills. The activity will have four intermediate results: (1) Government commitment to, and support of, evidence-based reading instruction increased, (2) early grade reading classroom instruction improved, (3) service delivery systems in early grade reading improved, and (4) parent, community, and private support for early grade reading increased. Approximately 5,400 public school kindergarten will be reached in two years and 172,800 grades one and two public primary school students will benefit from the activity over five-year period. Baseline data collection is currently ongoing. Analysis from the baseline assessment will inform the implementation of the early grade reading activity.

ADOLESCENT GIRLS EDUCATION PROGRAM SUPPORT

Through the Learning Links Project, USAID will address girls' diverse psychosocial needs and provide access to education in an innovative, safe, and rigorously monitored learning environment. Over a three- year period, the Learning Links Project will combine a cadre of 360 tutor-mentors, the MOE's ABE curriculum, SMS based evaluations, and micro-incentives to create and provide access to an alternative, flexible learning environment for 2,500 teen girls who have left school due to pregnancy. The Project's activities will train 360 numerate and literate women to serve as tutor-mentors for the Liberian Ministry of Education's Alternative Basic Education Curriculum and connect them to these girls who have dropped out of school. Through these trained tutor-mentors, the girls will develop literacy

and numeracy skills at a pace comparable to their in-school peers thereby reducing literacy and numeracy deficiencies and transitioning to formal school.

ACCELERATED LEARNING FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

USAID's new Accelerated Quality Education (AQE) program will implement an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) for students aged 8-15 to address the problem of over-age, out-of-school children. AQE will help the Ministry of Education institutionalize an ALP regulatory framework and prepare students to transition into the formal education system. AQE will be implemented in 260 schools. It is a four year program, which targets 48,000 out-of-school children and provides access to quality education for them. The AQE Project is being implemented in 260 identified ALP sites across the six USAID-focused counties. In addition to providing access, it is anticipated that the implementation of this project will lead to an institutionalized ALP regulatory framework that will enable learners to transition to formal school. Approximately 780 teachers will be identified and provided professional development opportunities to improve quality instruction that will lead to the acquisition of equivalent primary school competencies for learners.

EARLY GRADE READING

USAID plans to support an early grade reading activity for grades one and two students in public primary schools in six targeted counties in Liberia. A pilot literacy skills program for students in public kindergarten schools is also planned. The goal of this activity is that after two years of schooling, students will read and understand grade level text in English and pre-primary students will develop the oral vocabulary required for emergent literacy skills. Approximately 5,400 public school kindergarten are expected to be reached in a two year period and approximately 172,800 grades one and two public primary school students will benefit from the activity over a five-year period.